

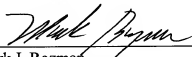
REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Pending claims 1, 2, 12, 13, 15, 18, 27, 31, 32, 41 and 48 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) over EP 0180450A2 (Tults). Independent claims 1, 18, 27, 31, 41 and 48 have been amended to include limitations of dependent claims indicated to have allowable subject matter. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims are patentable.

In view of these remarks, the application is now in condition for allowance and the Examiner's prompt action in accordance therewith is respectfully requested. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 20-1504.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: September 9, 2004



Mark J. Rozman
Registration No. 42,117
TROP, PRUNER & HU, P.C.
8554 Katy Freeway, Suite 100
Houston, Texas 77024-1805
(512) 418-9944 [Phone]
(713) 468-8883 [Fax]
Customer No.: 21906